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MEMORIAL

OF THE

Association of American Physicians.

The Association of American Physicians, assembled in annual session at Washington, D. C., May 2, 1896, by unanimous vote and by the appended signatures of its officers and members, hereby records its most earnest protest against such legislation as that proposed by the bill entitled "A bill for the further prevention of cruelty to animals in the District of Columbia"—Senate Bill 1552—in so far as this legislation embodies measures intended to control and restrict experimentation upon animals conducted in the Government laboratories, the medical schools and other institutions of the higher learning in the District of Columbia. In making this protest the Association begs to present to the members of Congress the following considerations:

Experimentation upon animals is an absolutely indispensable and the most important method of investigation of the properties of living organisms, and of the influences

which modify these properties. The science and the art of medicine are based upon the knowledge of the structure and the functions of living matter, and consequently in large part upon knowledge which has been obtained by experiments upon animals and which could have been gained in no other way.

The benefits to mankind of the knowledge thus acquired are of inestimable value. To mention only a few of the results obtained within recent years by animal experimentation, attention is called to the discoveries which have revolutionized surgical practice by the introduction of antiseptic methods of treatment, which have rendered infrequent the occurrence of childbed fever, which have made it possible to prevent the development of hydrophobia after the bite of rabid animals, which have furnished an efficacious method of cure of the otherwise incurable disease, myxœdema, and which, by the antitoxin treatment, have greatly lessened the fatality of diphtheria. By these and similar discoveries derived from experiments upon animals, untold thousands of human lives have been rescued which would otherwise surely have perished.

The saving of animal life itself and the consequent commercial profits resulting from knowledge gained by experiments upon animals have been enormous. The benefits derived from experiments upon animals largely go to the improvement of the public health and the prevention of infectious diseases. Their immediate value is often not recognizable by the individual, unless he has informed himself upon subjects which are in large measure of a

technical nature and belong to the study of scientific experts.

It would require a volume to set forth adequately the results, beneficial to mankind and to animals, of knowledge derived from experiments on animals. The assertion of many opponents of vivisection, that knowledge obtained from animal experimentation and which could be obtained in no other way has been of little or no benefit to mankind, can be referred only to ignorance or to wilful misrepresentation.

Never was there a time in which experimental medicine gave promise of results so important for the welfare of mankind as those which we may reasonably expect in the near future, and never was there so little justification as at present to hamper in any way the work of those engaged in searching by the experimental method for means of preventing and curing disease.

Obvious as are such beneficial results of animal experimentation as those specified,—and many other similar instances might have been cited by way of illustration,—it should be borne in mind that the full significance of the importance and of the results of experimentation upon animals for the biological and the medical sciences can be adequately appreciated only by those who possess special knowledge of these sciences, and that it is only those who are thus informed who can fully realize the injury which would be inflicted upon these sciences and upon medicine by such legislation as that contemplated in this bill. Upon this matter it is the voice of science and of medicine, which is likewise the voice of true philanthropy, which should

be heard and which should control legislative action, and not that of those who, however worthy their impulses, however high their social position, however great their knowledge in other departments, do not possess that special knowledge which renders them competent to judge of the merits of this question.

The voice of science and of medicine, so far as it receives authoritative utterance, is overwhelmingly opposed to legislation of any kind which would take in any measure the direction of experimental medicine and physiology out of the hands of those who on account of their special fitness have been chosen by the authorities of our higher institutions of learning and of research to convey instruction and to conduct investigations in these departments. Unnecessary and offensive in the highest degree would it be by any system of official inspection, such as that proposed in this bill and which might readily be used as a system of outrageous espionage, or by legislation of any kind, to attempt to dictate or control how, and by whom, and for what purposes, and under what conditions, and upon what animals in the laboratories and the institutions of the higher learning experiments shall be made. The decision as to these matters should be left wholly to those in charge of these institutions, who are the ones most competent to judge of them.

Those engaged in the Government laboratories, in the medical schools and the universities of this country, in teaching and in investigations which require experimentation upon animals, can be safely intrusted with this function. To say the least, they are not less humane than are those

who advocate legislation to control and restrict animal experimentation in these institutions. The assertion which has been made by anti-vivisectionists, that experimentation on animals brutalizes those who witness and practice it, is an insult, without shadow of foundation, to a class of scientific workers devoted to the investigation of problems of the highest importance to the welfare of mankind. Their efforts are to secure the desired knowledge by infliction of the least possible needless pain upon animals used for experimentation, and we do not hesitate to assert that this solicitude to avoid the infliction of unnecessary pain renders them more susceptible than the average man to actual cruelty to animals.

We have been unable to learn that there has been a single instance in which abuse has been made of the practice of animal experimentation in the Government laboratories, the medical schools or the universities of the District of Columbia. Any legislation which proposes in any way to control, restrict, or interfere with animal experimentation in these institutions is, therefore, unnecessary, as well as offensive to those who are engaged in the scientific investigations conducted therein.

If there be any doubt as to the opposition of the great body of scientific men and of physicians to such legislation as that proposed in this bill, we beg that Congress will not take action favorable to this bill or to any similar one until sufficient time has been given for a full expression of opinion from scientific and medical associations throughout this country, for the matter is one not merely of local

interest, but may concern the future progress of the biological and medical sciences, and of preventive and curative medicine throughout this country.

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